



Chapter One

Fog

Harry Mason walked into the fog.

His footsteps were unsteady as he was still feeling the shock of the accident.

His Jeep had broken through a guardrail and was now lying at the bottom of a ravine.

Harry recalled the shadow that had dashed out into the road. Just as he was about to plow through the small, child-like figure, he completely lost control of the wheel, the vehicle was like an iron horse that refused to follow the driver's reigns. Tires screeching, the jeep had collided with the guardrail as if it was moving on its own accord.

It was hard to remember anything else after that. By the time he had come to his senses, the engine was stalling and the Jeep wouldn't budge.

"Cheryl!" Harry called out through the vision-obscuring mist. His daughter had disappeared from the car. It was unlikely that she had thrown out by the impact of the crash as the passenger door was left wide open. Not only that, but he was positive she'd been wearing her seat-belt properly. He yelled again, but there was no reply.

He searched around the area of the wreck, but found nothing. Harry



was beginning to panic, his body burning with parental concern for his daughter.

He absentmindedly reached with the back of his hand to wipe the sweat from his forehead, only to find that the liquid dripping down his face was blood. It was only a scratch, he wasn't seriously hurt.

But what about Cheryl? Where was she? Was she unconscious? Bleeding? Injured? Maybe she went off to try to find help. Harry knew that Cheryl was a clever child, and he wasn't just thinking that because he was her father.

She was clever, resourceful, and seemed to possess wisdom beyond her seven years. But she was also incredibly reckless, a fact that only increased Harry's worry.

Charles Hatcher... Albert Fish... Jesse Pomeroy...

The names of these loathsome people from the past surfaced in his mind and overlapped with the image of his daughter. Those were the monsters that lurked in society, hunting down their young victims with their poison fangs.

If Cheryl, a little girl lost in an unfamiliar city, were to encounter a person like that...

Harry continued through the thick fog, his every thought consumed by the need to find his daughter as soon as possible.

"Cheryl!" He called her name again and again as he pushed through



the countless water vapors that swirled through the air. The dense mist hung over the world like a sea of clouds that fell from the sky. It blanketed the town of Silent Hill, a small town with less than twenty thousand inhabitants. Was this kind of weather unusual for the area?

Harry had never heard anything about fog this severe occurring around the lakeside resort town. The entire lake would have had to evaporate to create something like this...

What a failure of a vacation this was turning out to be. He should have been leisurely floating across the lake with a fishing rod in his hands by now...Or enjoying the Maine wilderness with his daughter...

“Hey Daddy, do you think there’ll be ponies there? I wanna ride a pony around, just like a cowboy!” Since they began their long car ride, Cheryl had hardly been able to contain her excitement. Harry couldn’t really blame her; it was her first vacation after all.

“Okay cowgirl, if we can find a petting zoo, you can pick out a nice pony and ride it all day if you want. But just make sure not to get into any bar fights. I don’t want to have to skip town before high noon.” Harry played along with a smile.

“I’ll lasso up a cow. Then you and me can have a barbeque!”

“Sounds tasty. But I think dad would rather have a trout from the lake. Do you think you’d like to try and catch a fish?”



“Yeah! But...I feel kinda bad for the little fishies. Maybe if we catch them, we should let them go.” “Oh, so you’ll feel sorry for the fish, but not the cow?” “It’s different. Cows always look like they’re frowning and they smell really bad. They’re not really cute at all.”

Harry couldn’t help but laugh at her child-like pickiness.

She hated cows, even though her favorite food was beef stew. For the first time, Cheryl’s expression darkened and her excited chattering stopped. Silence quickly descended over the vehicle. Did I hurt her feelings? Harry wondered as he glanced over at her. Should I say I’m sorry? “What’s the matter?”

“Daddy...are you gonna get in trouble because you’re taking me on a trip instead of going to work? I know you’re really busy...”

“Don’t worry, daddy’s not going to get fired just for taking a little time off. I have a freelance career, remember?”

“But Daddy...I heard you fighting on the phone with someone from work.”

“You mean that stupid publishing agent Edward? He keeps trying to make me write about worthless entertainment gossip. He keeps going on about how ‘hot rock star scandals are ‘in’ right now” and he even told me to cancel the trip I already had planned! So I told him that spending time with Cheryl is way more important to me than work. I just had to...raise my voice a bit to get that through his thick skull, that’s all.”

“Okay.” Cheryl nodded, but her warm smile didn’t return.



Harry apologized to her in his heart. He knew he didn't always have the chance to be a good father to his daughter. Ever since his wife Jodie died, he'd been left to raise Cheryl by himself. Fortunately, Harry was a writer so aside from the occasional information collecting; he could work from his home.

It was far from easy. Sometimes he was so busy that all he could do for Cheryl was cook her meals, give her baths, and take her to and from school. Even when he could only manage these minimum necessities, he did everything he could to care for his daughter. All his other time was spent working to make a living, so Harry could hardly ever enjoy any time to himself.

Cheryl understood this; she knew her dad had to work hard every day and she knew he was doing it for her because he loved her. She never got to go to an amusement park or to the playground, and even going out for fast food only happened very rarely. But she was always patient and understanding. She never complained, not even once.

That's what made Harry decide to take a trip to Silent Hill, the place where Cheryl's always wanted to go, even though she had no idea where it was. Even though he had taken this trip with all the best intentions, Cheryl was now in danger all because of one stupid driving mistake. If she was kidnapped or ended up meeting a gruesome fate, the regret would be too much to bear.

Every year, hundreds of boys and girls were sexually assaulted, beaten, chopped to pieces, or murdered...and some are never found at all.



Harry's mind was infested with these grim statistics, all from a book detailing bizarre murder cases he had written some time ago. Those crimes had seemed so unimaginable, yet now they could so easily become a part of his reality.

Cheryl...were could you be?

It took almost no time at all to reach Silent Hill from the site of the accident. Running swiftly along a sidewalk, Harry soon arrived at what appeared to be a residential neighborhood. He was far from the shops and parks that attracted the flocks of tourists, but there still wasn't a single passer-by to be seen. Maybe it was just because of the fog that limited his vision. The roads were empty as well.

It was quiet. Too quiet.

It was in the middle of the day, but the silence made it feel like the dead of night. It was the silence of a ghost town, a place devoid of life. Though the place gave Harry a strange sense of foreboding, his concern for his daughter crushed any doubts or hesitation he might have had.

Finally, he found what he was looking for. He rushed over to a public phone and immediately dialed the number for the police. The receiver beeped as if it was working, but the call never connected. He tried again and again, but the results were the same. Harry resentfully slammed down the receiver.

“Damn cops...how the hell are they supposed to get anything done



around here if they can't get off their lazy asses long enough to take one stupid phone call!?" Harry yelled, as if shouting to the air would magically spur the police into action.

Trying to search for Cheryl in an unfamiliar town would be next to impossible on his own. On the other hand, it would be just as difficult to try to track down the police station. "Hey, is anyone there?" Harry called out, hoping for the faint chance that someone else was out here wandering through the fog as well. He was answered only by the same oppressive silence. However, his eye happened to catch a flicker of blue through the thick white veil. Was there someone there?

"Hey, wait!" Harry yelled again as he dashed into the fog. Just before he was close enough to make out features, the small figure turned and fled. Even from behind it looked familiar.

Wasn't Cheryl wearing a blue dress...? "Cheryl...Cheryl, is that you!?" The girl said nothing, she only continued to run. "Wait, where are you going?" Harry gave chase.

Strangely enough, even with the advantage of the legs of an adult over the legs of a child, he wasn't able to keep up. "Wait! Please come back!" Could this be a case of mistaken identity?

If this girl did happen to be a stranger, it would certainly make him seem more like a predator than a concerned father. Still, Harry ran. Whether it was Cheryl or not, he had to make absolutely sure. And if he did have the wrong girl, maybe she'd at least be willing to give him directions.



The girl dissolved into the fog, leaving only a thin, hazy shadow for Harry to follow. The shadow darted left and was sucked into an alley. The alley ended in a solid brick wall, but off to the side was a metal gate that hung open.

Beyond the gate was a narrow passage squeezed between two buildings. He has lost sight of the shadow, but there was no path it could take other than this one. The rusty side gate screeched as he pushed it aside.

Harry froze.

The area just inside the passage was splattered with blood.

“What the...?” In the center of the bloody pool lay a dead animal. Its pathetic body was crushed and broken, as if someone had savagely beaten it with a metal baseball bat.

From what he could tell by looking at its remains, Harry guessed it used to be a dog.

Who could do something so cruel...?

He recalled that many pathological criminals had a history of animal abuse. Harry did his best to avert his eyes as he proceeded down the bent passageway.

Between the fog overhead and the narrowness of the path, it felt like he was completely cut off from the world. He felt like he would



suffocate. The confined space revived memories of his childhood; when Harry had crawled into a storm drain to play, but panicked and became trapped. He only escaped once one of his friends had dragged him out by his feet. That short but terrifying experience had given Harry a fear of enclosed spaces that persisted to this day. He would have turned back immediately if it weren't for Cheryl. Family ties were certainly strong enough to drive a person to overcome their fears...but they were also strong enough to drive a person to folly and self-destruction... Again he found the floor painted with pools of blood. The building walls gradually turned to chain-link fences, which were also red and dripping wet.

This was starting to look less like a back alley and more like a crime scene. Where were the police? Shouldn't one of the residents have reported this? Has anyone even noticed? Harry stood frozen. His horrified gaze was fixated on the corridor's dead end. There was a corpse there; beaten, bloody, and tied to the fence with barbed wire as if it had been crucified. However, this was no dog...it was clearly a human being. Holding his breath to endure the repulsive stench, Harry examined the body more closely. As he had suspected, the corpse had the height and physique of an adult. A wave of relief washed over him as he realized that this couldn't be Cheryl. But then...where had that little girl gone? This passage was a dead end so she couldn't have escaped. Harry was positive he hadn't seen any side streets...

As Harry turned to retrace his steps, a fierce roar shook his eardrums. It was an unpleasant sound that made the hairs on the back of his neck stand on end, like the shrieks of two tomcats engaged in a vicious turf war. Whatever made the sound was uncomfortably



close. In fact, he could smell pungent, fishy breath coming from just behind him... In that moment, Harry was slammed against the fence and crumpled to the blood-stained ground. The impact hit him harder than the car crash had. Before he even had time to feel the pain, his consciousness began to fade. In the corner of his darkening vision, he could just barely see a strange, hideous figure lumbering towards him. The last thing to reach Harry was the sounds of gunshots in the distance. *Jodie*...he had met her during the fall of their sophomore year of college. After hearing that she broke up with her high school boyfriend, he gathered all his courage and approached her. Having spent so long living in the shadow of unrequited love, he wanted to offer as much comfort as possible to this girl that he had only ever spoken to in his dreams. Truthfully, he had been infatuated with her since high school; watching her daily with longing eyes but never able to tell her how he felt. He remembered how ashamed he'd been when he asked her to a dance, only to learn that she was already going with someone else. But none of that mattered once they finally met. The two of them were so blissfully in love, that they were wed before either of them graduated. Every day of the nine years since then felt like their honeymoon. Even when Harry decided to quit his job and become a freelance nonfiction writer, she supported him whole heartedly. From their perfect love, they created a perfect life, even though they were never blessed with children. Nine years after their fated meeting, Jodie went to heaven. Although it felt more like God had stolen her away and forcibly dragged her to heaven. One day, as she was walking home from work, a burglar caught in a police chase sped at a breakneck pace over the curb and crushed her. Her face was just as beautiful as it had been when she was alive as she slept in her coffin...Cheryl, too young to understand the concept of death, could only stare with her



innocent little eyes... *Jodie...Jodie...Cheryl...* “Cheryl!” Harry called out, sitting bolt upright on the bench he had been resting on. “You’re finally up, huh? How’re you feeling?” A woman said with a faint smile. It wasn’t Jodie and it most certainly wasn’t Cheryl. She had short, blonde hair and a face that wore no make-up, but instead wore a tough, almost masculine expression. She was looking down at Harry, her arms crossed. Her gaze wasn’t that of a woman eyeing a man, but of someone observing a suspect to determine his guilt. It came as no surprise when Harry spotted the badge she wore over her dark blue police uniform. “Surprisingly enough, I think I’m okay.” Harry answered. No sooner did he speak than a jolt of pain ran through his left shoulder. He grimaced, and looked around. The bench he was seated on was next to a table, which was next to several other sets of tables and seating. Across the room sat a long counter with many posters and menus posted above it. He was inside a restaurant. “You’re lucky you only got off with a couple bruises. A little longer and you probably would have gotten yourself eaten.” “So, you’re the one who saved me?” “Yeah.” The female officer shrugged like it was no big deal. There was one thing that was still getting on Harry’s nerves. “Still, you’re a cop, aren’t you? What’s going on with this town’s security? I tried to call the station earlier to get some help, but I couldn’t get it to connect. Please, my daughter’s gone missing, we need to hurry and go look for her!”

The policewoman answered Harry’s criticism and frantic plea with a cool, calm attitude. “You’re a tourist, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, what’s it matter?”



“I’m not actually from this town. I’m an officer from Brahms, the next town over. The name’s Cybil Bennett. And you are?”

“Harry. Harry Mason.”

“Hold on...you’re *that* Harry Mason? The one who wrote ‘The Criminal’s Mask’?”

“Yeah.”

“I just finished reading that. Your sociological analysis of offenders who go unnoticed in communities under the guise of normal citizens was interesting and quite useful. It’s an honor to meet you, even if it isn’t the the...best of circumstances. I guess it really is a small world.” Harry could hardly believe the coincidence; what were the chances of meeting one of his readers in a place like this? His immediate reaction was to thank her for contributing to the book’s meager sales, but he stopped himself. He wasn’t here to sign any autographs. When the officer reached out for a handshake, Harry ignored the gesture and shouted, “What about my daughter!?”

“Cheryl was it? You were muttering something about her while you were out.” “Yes. It’s bad enough that she’s all alone out there, but if there are any more of those creatures...please, we have to go to the police and gather a search party as soon as possible!”

Cybil paused for a moment, as if reluctant to tell such grim news to a man already near hysterical. “Sorry to say this, but I haven’t been able to track down another officer anywhere in this town.”

“What?”



“We hadn’t been receiving any contact from Silent Hill in some time so I came to check it out. The whole town is empty, like everyone just up and left overnight.”

“But that’s impossible...”

“Must not be since you’re the only person I’ve been able to find. I saw you go into that alleyway so I followed you just in time to see that monster appear from the fog...I was just barely able to drive it off with my gun and save you. It was a bit of a struggle just to drag you this far.” Cybil shrugged and let out a soft chuckle.

“I should head back to Brahms and get some help. Must be the fog or something, but I can’t get my radio to work either. You should leave town too. I know you’re worried about your daughter Mr. Mason but that’s a matter best left to the police. Since I crashed my bike, we’ll have to take your car back to Brahms anyway.” “That won’t work.” Harry shook his head.

“My jeep’s in a ditch right now. That’s how Cheryl ended up missing in the first place.”

“Geeze, this just keeps getting worse...It’s way too dangerous for you to stay in town alone.”

“Maybe, but Cheryl is in just as much danger. If she just got lost while trying to look for me, then I’m more likely to find her if I stay here.”



“So what are your plans if you run into another monster?”

“Don’t worry, I have a weapon. I just couldn’t use it before because that creature caught me off-guard” Harry reached into his jacket pocket and reached for his nine milometer handgun. Ever since he began writing about criminals, he found that he’d quickly become a supporter of gun possession. He firmly believed that even if guns disappeared from this country, crime wouldn’t and he’d much rather have such a necessary tool if he ever need to protect his daughter. He had this weapon stashed in the jeep’s glove box and had grabbed it at the first sign of trouble. However, rather than the cold touch of steel, his hand felt nothing inside his pocket. Harry checked his pants pockets and found that they too were empty. He mentally retraced his steps, desperately trying to think of anywhere it could be, even checking to see if it had fallen underneath the bench he had been lying on. “Lose something?” Cybil’s tone reminded Harry of a mother scolding a child over losing their favorite toy. “I must have dropped it when that monster hit me...” Harry felt some of his courage slip away. Still, that alley couldn’t be too far from here. If he could just make his way back there...

“I’ll...manage. I’ll find her no matter what I have to do.”

Cybil shrugged again and sighed.

“You’re being very reckless you know.”

“I know but...risking my life is better than sitting back and waiting for someone else to bring my daughter home safely.”

“So you really want to stay huh...” Cybil said, finally realizing how



useless it would be to argue any further. She stepped behind the counter and pulled a small automatic handgun from the shelf below the register. The owner of this restraint must have kept it close as an anti-burglar measure.

“Take this and be sure to watch yourself.” She placed the gun in Harry’s hand.

“And don’t die. I’d like to read your next book.” Her face softened into a coy smile, but her eyes were as sharp as ever.

“Thanks, and sorry for losing my temper earlier.” Harry eyed the weapon in his hands. For the first time since he found himself in the disastrous situation, he was beginning to feel like he had someone on his side. “Now I want you to stay put, okay? Don’t leave this building.”

“Got it.”

Even as Cybil turned to leave the café, she didn’t doubt for a second that he’d break that promise as soon as she was gone.

After Cybil had departed, Harry stood up from his bench. Sliding the handgun between his pants and belt, he turned and looked around the café. At several tables sat plates of half-eaten food and full cups of cold coffee. In the kitchen there was a cutting board strewn with freshly-chopped lettuce and hamburger meat that had yet to be formed into patties. There wasn’t anything broken and there was no sign of vandalism. It was as if the employees had abandoned their work and the customers had abandoned their food in a hurry. If this place was deserted just like the police station, then maybe the whole



town really was empty.

But how could a mass exodus go so completely unnoticed? There was no news of the event and even the police from the neighboring town were unaware of the situation. Could it be a government cover-up? Perhaps some sort of hazardous infection broke out and everyone was removed from town and quarantined...No, if that had happened the town itself would have been blocked off and no one would have been allowed to leave. He also would have run into some sort of checkpoint on the highway on his way here. It was wildly unlikely that they were using one place in town to house thousands of people all at once though. So if nobody left town, that meant that every person living in Silent Hill had just vanished, like they were going about their business when suddenly they were all sucked into a black hole.

Harry grinned and began to chuckle at the thought. He certainly hadn't considered the possibility of supernatural happenings yet. This was all beginning to sound like a bad horror novel. But no matter how many times you read a book, it's completely different from real life. There's no way Harry could ever believe there was something paranormal behind all of this, he wouldn't let himself. But now it was different. He had already seen with his own eyes a creature that defied any logical explanation. A creature that had very nearly killed him. If he didn't believe before, he would have to start believing now.

Something colorful caught his eye and he noticed a tourist brochure with a map of the town printed on it sitting next to the register. It was being used as an ad, as there was a large red arrow pointing at the restaurant he was currently standing in. The building was facing



Bachman Road, which stretched from north to south across the map. That was the road he had been driving down just before the accident. *It must be around here then...* Harry's finger traced a path from Bachman Road to where it intersected with Finney Street and found an unmarked street that continued south. That was the alley where he chased the girl through the fog.

Harry knew it would be incredibly reckless to return to the spot where he was attacked, but he had to risk it. There had to be some sort of clue there, maybe a door he had overlooked. That girl had to be hiding around there somewhere. He folded the brochure and stuck it in his pocket.

After a couple moments of rest, Harry finally gathered up the resolve to leave the café. Just as his hand touched the doorknob, a harsh sound assaulted his ears. It was white noise crackling from a radio. Harry turned and saw a small pocket radio sitting on a table in the far corner of the restaurant. He walked back to the table and took a closer look. Someone had left the power switch on. Maybe one of the customers was listening to a baseball game at the time everyone disappeared. Until now the volume had been too low for him to notice, but why had it suddenly grown louder? Cybil had said that her radio wasn't working because of the abnormal weather...For some reason the radio's garbled hissing was making Harry incredibly uncomfortable. The noise was like nails scraping against a chalkboard; it made his skin prickle and his hair stand on end.

As the static grew in intensity, it began to mingle with another odd noise, the sound of flapping wings coming from outside the café. Harry spun around to face the window and was met with sight of an



appalling creature hovering just outside. Unlike the monster that attacked him in the alley, this creature resembled a huge bat. Its leathery skin was a sickly mottled brown and stretched like canvas over its massive wings. It possessed vicious talons like a bird of prey; Harry could hear them scrape against the pavement as it came to rest on the sidewalk.

He'd never seen or even heard of such a large winged animal existing in this area before. A biologist might have drooled over such an incredible discovery, but the mere sight of the creature was making Harry nauseous. Its parched skin made a terrible crackling noise as it folding its wings and settled at its perch. The features on what should have been its face and the structure of its body were so twisted it looked like it had been run over by a car. The stench of death the hung over the monster was so strong that it seemed to seep through the window and fill the café with the foul odor.

For a moment, Harry was so stunned he couldn't tear his eyes away from the repulsive sight, but he quickly scrambled to the floor and hid against the wall underneath the window. The bird-like monster was surveying the area with a fierce glint in its beady eyes. No doubt it was searching for prey. With its pick-ax like beak, it looked like it could tear flesh from bone in a matter of seconds. Anything, or anyone, who crossed its path would most certainly be remorselessly ripped to pieces and devoured. Feeling the monster's dangerous presence through the wall his back was pressed against, Harry held his breath like his life depended on it. Static continued to spill from the radio, now beginning to sound like mocking laughter. The noise cut through the silence, as if it was trying to alert the monster to Harry's presence. He wished desperately that he could go turn it off,



but he didn't dare move from his hiding place.

The monster let out an ear-piercing screech that echoed through the empty streets and the sound of fluttering wings came again. It sounded like it had left. After what seemed like an eternity, Harry chanced a quick peek out the window and saw with incredible relief that it had indeed flown away. He turned his head to look at the radio. As the "bird" grew farther way, the static lessened until the café was quiet once again.

It took surprisingly little time to rebuild the confidence to leave the restaurant. During the nerve-wracking encounter with the bird monster, he had been gripped by paralyzing terror. For a moment, he was so shaken that he was tempted to heed Cybil's warning and barricade himself inside the café. However, the thought of his daughter meeting with such a creature spurred him into action. Harry suppressed his cowardly thoughts and forced himself to step outside.

Silent Hill was still sealed beneath a blanket of fog. He strained his ears, but Harry couldn't hear anything through the frozen silence. A howl echoed through the distance. It sounded like the barking of a dog. It must be a pet left behind by its owner. Harry felt bad for the poor thing, but he couldn't afford to stop and help. Cheryl was his top priority now. Once he found her, his only plan was to get as far away from this strange town as quickly as possible. He would have to leave the chained animals to suffer from hunger and thirst and hope that some kind soul arrives to help them before they grow too weak to survive.

Harry hurried north up Bachman Road, then turned west onto Finney



Street. Icy gusts of wind fought against him every step of the way and the moist air was making his clothes damp and heavy. Each of his pounding footsteps were quickly swallowed by the white curtain of fog and continued to echo through the stillness. Before long, he found himself staring down the same alley he visited before. He pushed on without hesitation until he caught sight of the metal gate in the alley's furthest left corner.

There was a small shape curled in front of the gate. Harry couldn't help but picture the three-headed Cerberus guarding the entrance to hell. As the figure sluggishly rose to its feet, he could see that it was indeed a dog. It regarded him warily as he carefully approached.

"Hey there little guy. Were you the one making all that noise?" He reached out his hand to pat the animal on the head, but he was beginning to feel a bit uneasy. What if it was unfriendly? Still, just as he was on a quest to find his daughter, he could sympathize with a dog that had lost its owner. Someone somewhere was probably worried sick that their precious pet was missing. As he moved closer, the fog that separated them faded and the animal's true form was revealed.

He had made a decent enough guess when he called the thing a "dog". It probably had been a dog at some point in its life, but what remained of it now was just barely enough to recognize it as a canine. Most all of its hair had fallen out and pinkish, burn-like splotches of diseased flesh covered its entire body. The creature was so emaciated it seemed like little more than dry skin wrapped over the skeletal frame of a dog. On top of all that, it was clearly suffering from rabies as well; its eyes, now fixed solely on Harry, were filled



with crazed hostility.

Static spilled out of his jacket pocket, like the radio was sounding an alarm. It sounded just like it had when Harry spotted the avian monster outside the café. Maybe this radio can pick up something that humans can't, like some kind of electromagnetic wave. Maybe that's how it always sensed the presence of these unnatural beings before Harry could. That was his theory anyway.

The monster's lips curled into a snarl, revealing its yellowed fangs. It let out a deep, murderous growl that filled the air with the stench of its rotten breath, a stench so strong it nearly made Harry choke.

"Stay back!" Harry fought to keep his voice level as he took a slow step backwards.

"It's okay boy...just run along now." The moment he reached down to retrieve the pistol from his belt, the "dog" shot forward like a missile, giving him only a second to react. He heard a sharp crack as the shot he fired bounced off the pavement inches away from his target. The rabid dog lunged at the outstretched arm holding the gun, looking to take a chunk of Harry's flesh into its disease-ridden jaws. Harry withdrew his arm just fast enough that the teeth met the sleeve of his jacket instead.

"Let go!" The more Harry struggled to twist his arm free of the dog's jaws, the more fiercely it sunk its teeth into his sleeve. He hoped that the fabric would tear off, but his durable name-brand jacket held up against the assault. Harry swung his leg back and kicked his attacker



as hard as he could. The dog let out a shriek of pain as the tip of his shoe sunk into its soft underbelly. It released its grip and tumbled onto the pavement.

That injured cry hit Harry straight through the heart. He couldn't stand to see animals being abused like this. However, the usually gentle-natured man was still human, his actions now governed by self-preservation and fear. He quickly aimed his weapon and fired. Once, twice, three times...he carelessly pulled the trigger again and again, screaming insults with each shot. He fired until the fifteen round magazine was completely empty. The dog lay twitching in a spreading pool of blood.

Still breathing heavily, Harry slowly returned to his senses. He had to use all his energy just to force his muscles to move his stiff body. However, his intense relief withered in an instant as he heard growls from the trembling figure on the ground. The dog he believed to be dead began to struggle feebly back to its feet. Despite its near fatal injuries, it seemed to be rapidly recovering its strength.

Harry aimed that the creature again...only to be reminded that he had foolishly wasted all his ammo. Struck with a sudden burst of inspiration, he lifted his foot and brought it down with all the force he could muster on the creature's frail body. Ignoring the sickening, squishing sensation he felt beneath his shoe he stomped again and again until the dog lay still. Harry slumped to the ground, weak with exhaustion and the horror of what he had just done. Its skull was shattered and its body reduced to a bloody, flattened carcass. It was the same as the mangled dog he'd seen on the other side of the gate.



Although his question had been answered, it brought Harry no comfort. If someone else had encountered another mad dog roaming the streets, the possibility existed that even more were lurking around now. Whatever was going on in Silent Hill had to be pretty serious if it could turn someone's pet into that ferocious beast. Cybil wasn't kidding when she said it was dangerous.

As he went through the gate and walked down the alley, Harry meticulously checked for any gap big enough for a child to squeeze through. He found nothing. There was one iron back door with two small ventilation windows, but it was locked tight. He couldn't get it to budge no matter how hard he tried. The windows were so far out of reach that Harry couldn't even touch them, let alone a small girl. He gave up on the door and continued onwards.

His fruitless search came to a halt when he reached the alley's dead end. The gruesome crucified corpse was there waiting for him. He averted his eyes, looking down at the pavement instead. He noticed pieces of paper scattered across the ground. He didn't remember seeing these here before. He reached down and picked one up. The page was covered in crayon drawings; there was a picture of Snoopy, a bride standing in a church, a balloon and a dove flying in the sky, a garden full of flowers... They all seemed incredibly familiar.

He spotted the green cardboard cover lying nearby. There was a person's face scribbled on it. Harry's face. These torn pages were all from Cheryl's sketchbook. Ever since he'd given it to her as a present on her fifth birthday, she'd carried it everywhere. Not only did he love to draw, but it was her favorite way to entertain herself when her father was too busy to play. By the time she'd turned seven



she'd managed to fill nearly half the pages.

"I hope you're not planning on making a career out of this," Harry teased.

"I don't think I wanna be an artist. I'd rather work outside than be cooped up inside all day." Cheryl's response stung a bit. He knew it was aimed directly at him.

"Well, artists don't have to stay in a studio all day. You could go out and do landscape sketches."

"Being a truck driver would be neat."

"A truck driver? That's a boy's job you know."

"But I'd get to go all over the country and see everything."

"That cargo can get pretty heavy though. You think you're up for it?"

"Okay, I'll be a taxi driver then!"

"Then you better be careful if you have to make change. I've seen your grades and math is definitely not your strong suit..."

"You're so mean Daddy!"

"Okay, okay. I'm sorry. I'll tell you what. You go out and do whatever makes you happy and no matter what you grow up to be,



Daddy will be right there cheering for you.”

Cheryl brought her sketchbook with her on their trip. He remembered her clutching it to her chest as she slept in the passenger’s seat. This was his daughter’s most cherished possession, so why would he find it torn to pieces in a place like this? *What’s that...?* Harry frowned and picked up one of the scattered sheets. Instead of a drawing, this page was filled with two large words: “TO SCHOOL”. It was definitely in Cheryl’s handwriting. But why?

He pulled out the tourist brochure and flipped to the map. Just outside of the residential area was a large building labeled “Midwich Elementary”. *She must be there!* Harry was absolutely convinced. Cheryl left this message behind for him. He had the sudden terrifying vision of his daughter being grabbed by a stranger and screaming for daddy to come save her. That combined with the knowledge of all the hideous crimes in his mind was enough to make him feel light-headed. Spurred on by impatience and rage strong enough to make him forget his aching feet and burning lungs, Harry sprinted with all the speed he could muster toward his new destination.

No one here either... Cybil had searched all across town and back, but in the end the result was always the same. She’d never seen a place so utterly empty before. The streets were silent, the homes were vacant, even the fog seemed to hang motionless in the air. The more she saw, the more dire the situation became.



As she hiked north up Bachman Road, she saw a destroyed segment of guardrail that led to a ditch on the side of the highway. Harry's jeep sat at the bottom of the ditch, just as he had said. It wasn't that she didn't believe his story, but the sight of the vehicle lifted a weight off her shoulders. It was something tangible and real. It was proof that she wasn't the only living human wandering these streets.

Cybil soon came to a halt. The road in front of her simply stopped; crumbling down into what appeared in the fog to be a bottomless pit. It would be suicidal to try to reach the road to Brahms from across this chasm. After another hour of walking across town, Cybil found to her disbelief that the road out of Silent Hill to the west, Finney Street, had collapsed as well.

Could there have been an explosion caused by a faulty gas line? Hard as it was to swallow, it was possible that it was just a very inconvenient accident. But as she trekked across town in a stunned daze, it became clear that this was no coincidence. Every single road leading out of the city had been similarly destroyed, leaving an impassable pit in its place. Not only did Cybil feel the act was deliberate, she got an overwhelming sense of malice at the sight. Who could have possibly done this? It was something so impossible; she might have looked at it as an act of God. Or perhaps, the devil. At the very least, this was the work of human hands with a very sinister purpose.

The fog swirled in the pit, like smoke from a cauldron. It made it look more like an endless abyss than a collapsed road. Cybil could



easily imagine that some sort of vile creatures could crawl up out of there at any second. Every route to freedom was sealed. The dense, grey canopy of fog still hung heavy over the town, acting almost as a magic barrier trapping them all inside.

Harry was huddled underneath the front porch stairs of a house facing Levin Street. White noise crackled from the radio in his pocket, steadily growing louder. Above him, large wing flaps echoed across the empty street and a blurry black shadow cut through the sheet of fog. It would hover off into the distance, then slowly return again. It was looking for him.

He still had the handgun, but thanks to his panic during the last encounter it was now empty and useless. The only other weapon he had was a thin steel water pipe he picked up on his way back out of the alley, but it was so brittle that he might just have a better chance making a run for it. And how badly he wanted to run. His impatience and desperate need to see his daughter safe far outweighed his fear, but he forced himself to wait.

He had tried to reach the school by Finny Street and Matheson Street, but both roads seemed to have caved in, making it impossible to continue. He had attempted to bypass the road by breaking into any number of the houses that lined the street, but every last door and window was locked and stood firm against any blows from his steel pipe. He should be glad the homes were so well protected, but



right now it was only making his mission more difficult. It almost felt like someone went out of their way to make sure Harry couldn't reach the school...

It was when he reached the Matheson Street chasm, right as he was beginning to lose hope, when something caught his eye. At the edge of the pit atop a pile of crumbled concrete, he found another message from Cheryl. Like the first note, it was scrawled in big letters over two sketchbook pages. The first read "DOG HOUSE," the second read "LEVIN ST". He remembered seeing a dog house in front of one of the houses on the street. That had to be the way. If he could just smash his way into that house, he could jump the fence in the back yard and make a run for the school.

It never occurred to him what an amazing coincidence it was to find that note where he did. The suspicion that finding a note written by his daughter telling him exactly where to go at exactly the moment he needed it might be too good to be true never even crossed his mind. His thoughts were only on Cheryl, his precious little girl. She's out there now, alone and afraid...

I have to go now! Harry inched out from under the porch stairs, holding his breath in anticipation. It was right there. The dog house was in his sights, sitting tantalizingly out of reach. He sat motionless, waiting for the flying monster to move away again so he could make a run for it. His legs itched with the desire to run, to carry his as fast as possible to that house. To Cheryl.

Another sound reached his ears. A faint tapping along with the sound



of wet meat slapping against the asphalt. A dog, just as gruesome and deformed as the one that attacked him on the way to the alley, was wandering down the street. Harry clenched the steel pipe tighter in his sweaty hands. If the dog spotted him, not only would he be forced to fight it but that would inevitably draw the bird's attention. He doubted his odds against one of the monsters, let alone both of them.

Icy beads of sweat slid down Harry's forehead. Now or never. He locked his sights on the yard with the doghouse and dashed from his hiding place. He couldn't hear the sound of wings and he was running in the opposite direction the dog was traveling. For one glorious second, Harry thought he was in the clear. Then he heard barks from behind him. They were quickly followed by claws scraping the pavement and rapidly closing in. Harry pushed himself even harder, desperately sprinting the last few yards to the front door. He stumbled over the first few porch steps, but regained his footing and made it to the front entrance.

He'd done it. He'd outrun the hellhound as was now only a few precious seconds from safety. At least, he would have been had the door not been firmly and heartlessly locked.

"Come on..." Harry begged the doorknob as he tried fruitlessly to force his way inside. He slammed his fist against the side of the house and yelled for help, but he was rewarded only with silence. The blood drained from his face. Inches away from sanctuary, yet trapped in the path of a vicious monster. Harry pressed his back against the cold wooden door and held the steel pipe in front of him. He was, at that moment, prepared to fight to his grave. Although,



once that dog got ahold of him he wasn't sure how much of him would be left to fill a grave. The starving beast leapt at him, its black eyes burring with feral rage and its jaws dripping with drool. A gust of wind tore across the patio, forcing Harry to cover his face. When he opened his eyes, the dog was gone. A piercing cry, like nails scraping against glass, ripped through the air. The familiar sound of wings mixed with yelps of pain and more horrid screeching. The monstrous bird had captured its prey.

Harry could hardly believe his eyes. The monsters were cannibalizing each other! The terror of imminent death gave way to overwhelming relief that drained his strength and sent him to his knees. It was all too much. The suffocating shroud of fog, his fear for his only daughter, the ever-looming threat of death at the hands of creatures that defied rational explanation...it was beginning to make him feel light-headed.

Snap out of it! You can't lose it now. You're her father, if you don't save Cheryl, no one else will! Harry breathed in deeply and pulled himself to his feet. He shakily made his way back down the steps. The dog house. That's what it said on the sketchbook page. That was his last hope. The small hut was empty; half of a broken chain was all that remained of the watchdog lived inside. A gleaming key was taped to the back wall. The house owners must have put it here for their dog to guard. How Cheryl knew this was here Harry had no clue, but he was grateful she did.

The key opened the door without issue and once inside, Harry locked the door and breathed a long sigh of relief. This house, like



the rest of the town, seemed to be abandoned. Despite the desperate situation, there was still an unsettling feeling that came with trespassing in a stranger's house. Like someone could jump out at you at any moment...

Only one thing grew stronger than his unease: the emptiness in his stomach. He passed through the living room and dining room into the kitchen and straight to the refrigerator. The food inside looked good enough. He grabbed a can of beer and finished it off in a matter of seconds. He popped open another can and drank between handfuls of ham and cheese. He hadn't eaten anything since noon. The plan had been to take Cheryl to a nice French restaurant by the lake for a special dinner. He heard great things about the salmon meuniere, and Cheryl had always wanted to eat at a fancy place like that. Harry never thought he'd be alone and scavenging food from a stranger's kitchen.

The alcohol had done its work to calm his frayed nerves and the food had filled him and restored some of his vigor. Much as he would have loved to stay and rest even longer, there was still work to be done before he could depart. Harry began to search the empty home for anything that could be of use. Ideally he wanted something that could replace his empty pistol as a suitable weapon. As he dug through closets and drawers, he prayed the former residents weren't pro-gun control.

His prayer was answered when he found a nine millimeter handgun much like his own stuffed in the bedroom nightstand. Unfortunately, it came with little spare ammo; the magazine contained twelve bullets and the cartage box, only seven. It wasn't much, but he'd



much rather have this than rely on the steel pipe. He discarded the empty gun and put the extra rounds in his pocket. He was also lucky enough to happen upon a small emergency flashlight. It would be invaluable once night fell.

Having collected everything of use, Harry made his way to the back door. He wasn't prepared for what he found on the other side: a wall of pitch-black darkness. It was mid-afternoon when he entered the house, and he'd only been inside a half hour at the most. Whatever was causing the bizarre events was not content with just manipulating the weather, now it was altering the flow of time. None of that mattered though. He'd walk out into a hurricane if it meant holding Cheryl safe in his arms again. Even if the world ended and God and the devil clashed in these very streets, he'd endure it all for her. Relying on nothing but a dim flashlight and a faint hope, Harry charged into the town dyed black with darkness.

"So night has fallen already..." Dahlia Gillespie whispered and she gazed out over the town from the church steeple.

"Darkness spills over the earth...like black tears from heaven..." A bitterly cold night breeze disturbed the black fog and tugged at the veil on her head. The snow white veil was the sign that marked her as a humble servant of The Lord. Though faithful as she had been to her God after so many long years, the road had not been easy. Through those seven years of hardships and humiliation, her devotion never wavered. Now she would be rewarded for her tireless efforts. The world would enter a shining new age, the people would



bow before their new God, and she too would receive honor and glory beyond imagination.

“To those who look down on you with contempt
To those who hold not the same glowing light in their hearts
May you, Oh Lord
With judgment swift and fair
Cast them into the hungry mouth of Hell
To suffer their eternal punishment”

A wrinkled smile rose to Dahlia’s lips as she intoned her prayer. Anxious as she was for the hour during which her words would come true, there was one last piece that had yet to fall into place: The Holy Mother. The blessed vessel by which God could be brought into the world. Without Her, the ritual would be impossible.

“Where are you my dear? Won’t you come out soon?” Dahlia glared through the darkness. If it was a game of hide-and-seek the girl wished, then hide-and-seek she would have to play.



Though he'd been forced to spend another four precious bullets on a dog on the way, Harry somehow managed to make it to Midwich Elementary in one piece. He burst open the front doors, inching into the lobby with a flashlight in one hand and a readied pistol in the other. He heard nothing in the darkened building but the soft shaking of his own hands. No signs of any monsters for now. Those heavy wooden doors seemed more than sturdy enough to keep the dogs from breaking in.

"Cheryl?" He yelled into the darkness. His echoed voice was the only reply. "Cheryl, where are you?"

He began a thorough search of the school building, starting from the first floor and the basement, all the way up to the second floor and the roof. He made note of each room as he checked it, the classrooms, staff rooms, chemistry lab, music room, nurse's office, library, and the courtyard. Harry even went so far as to check the bathrooms and individual lockers. Maybe she was silently huddled in some dark corner, hiding from whoever might have brought her here. Or maybe she'd already been caught. She could be just beyond his reach, all of her frantic cries for her father silenced by a gag in her mouth. The mere thought of some criminal laying their filthy hands on his daughter was enough to make Harry's stomach turn.

Each empty room, each silent hallway intensified these dismal visions until Harry found himself choking back tears of helpless frustration. *Come on, pull yourself together!* He scolded himself. *Cheryl is alive. She is safe. And you're going to find her.* If his search had turned up nothing, he'd just start over again. He'd scour this



desolate place as many times as it took if it meant finding even the smallest clue.

Harry was certain he had to have overlooked something. But nothing like this. He stood transfixed, back in the entrance lobby.

The reception desk was drenched in red. Warm, wet blood was splattered across the desk as well as the wall behind it. He had stood right here not ten minutes ago. He checked that office top to bottom. What sort of massacre could have happened in that time?

Head pounding, Harry burst into the reception office. He didn't find the bloodied body of a young girl, or any other bodies for that matter. Just more vivid splashes of fresh blood. Sheer relief stole the air from Harry's lungs and he slumped over the desk for support.

There were several documents spread across the desk, lists of visitors to the school and student emergency contact information. The papers were useless now, too soggy and blood-splattered to be read. Harry squinted leaning a little closer. Some of those splatters were not as random as he first thought. Smears of red overlapped the black ink on the pages, curving into words that spelled a cryptic poem.

It was nothing a seven year old child could have written but...at the same time, Harry could sense intent beneath those cryptic words. He knew they could have only been left for him by Cheryl. The idea was



far beyond any logical thought. Then again, he'd experienced so many impossible things already. Believing this seemed almost easy. Harry placed a hand onto the stained pages, scanning each word carefully. "Open time's door..." He recalled seeing what looked to be a clock tower out in the courtyard in the center of the school. It was a tall structure of concrete blocks pushed right up against the walls of the school. While it wasn't too large around, it seemed big enough to hide a person inside. Especially a small person. Harry had examined it before, but quickly gave up after finding no way inside. Now it seemed to be the best lead he had.

Harry stood before the imposing tower once more. The worn clock face sat at a motionless 5 o'clock. Maybe if he could get some power to it again, it hidden door would open. Let's see..."Darkness that brings the choking heat..." There was a boiler room in the basement of the building. The boiler itself was quiet, but if he turned it back on, perhaps that could be the "flames" that would "render the silence." That would make the boiler itself the "hungry beast" that could "open times door."

Harry raced down the stairs, bursting into the boiler room with the guidance of his flashlight. A hulking metallic machine cast its shadow over the dark room, looming like a monster waiting to be fed. With the flip of a switch on a small control panel, the room was suddenly bathed in red light. The boiler gave a long groan before roaring to life in a near deafening rumble of burning gasoline. Harry didn't even bother covering his ears; he was out the door the second it started moving.

He ran in a single-minded sprint through the building, pausing only



when the floor beneath him rang from a deep and echoing chime. It sounded one, two, three, four more times. Five o'clock. Sure enough, a small door in the side of the clock tower was sitting wide open, almost congratulating him for discovering its secret. The entrance was just large enough for him to crouch inside. The interior was cold and about as roomy as a phone booth, with nothing but a ladder on the floor, leading down into stagnant darkness. Harry didn't even have to think twice as he began his descent.

The ladder led down into a cramped corridor, which in turn let to another ladder leading up into an opening lit by hazy light.

"What the...?"

Harry emerged from passage to find himself...right back where he started: the same courtyard with the same buildings, the same clock tower looming behind him, and the same fog shrouding the darkened sky. Everything, down to the worn bricks under his feet, was identical to where he had stood just moments earlier. It was hard to tell in the darkness, but he must have traveled some distance underground, at least a couple yards. Either he'd found a secret passage leading to a suspiciously well-crafted replica of Midwich Elementary or he was going crazy.

The radio in his pocket crackled into a burst of static. Harry spun around, shining the weak beam of his flashlight through the fog.

Slap...slap...slap...

Uneven footsteps echoed through the courtyard. A dark figure emerged from the shadows, drawing closer by the second. Harry recognized nauseating stench immediately. It was the same creature that attacked him back in the alley. It was almost child-like in its stature and sluggish gait, but the closer it came, the less human it appeared.



Its head wasn't much of a head at all, just a neckless protrusion jutting out of its torso. Thick arms spouted from its sides, ending in a set of vicious claws that scraped the pavement as it lumbered forward. There were no traces of a nose or eyes, only a thin mouth stretching vertically across its 'face' that harbored a set of uneven, pointed teeth.

It opened and closed its mouth as it walked, appearing almost as if it were mumbling something. Or perhaps it was so anxious to take a bite out of Harry that it was just gnashing its teeth in anticipation. Harry's hands were shaking as he reached for the pistol in his belt. He'd faced monsters before but...this thing was no half-rotted dog. This thing was a broken, shambling imitation of a human being, a child even.

A single gunshot rang out. The monster staggered backwards, a gaping hole spewing blood from its chest. It didn't stop, too single minded in its feral hunting to feel pain. It continued advancing, saber-like claws rubbing together, itching to sink into their prey. The sight, the stench, the incessant grinding of teeth; it was too much for Harry to bear. This thing...this monster couldn't possibly exist within his carefully constructed view of reality.

He didn't realize he was screaming, not with his ears ringing with the sound of gunshots. His eyes were squeezed shut, blocking out everything but the kick of the gun in his hands. Finally, after an eternity of deafening noise, the magazine went empty and everything fell silent.

The thing was on the ground, convulsing in a pool of its own blood. The sight should have brought Harry some measure of relief, but it only sent more disgust welling within him. He reached up to wipe off his face, only for his jacket sleeve to return covered in the



creature's blood as well. This...thing's existence was so wholly contrary to everything he'd ever heard about a kind and benevolent God. What kind of sick God could create something so unholy? Harry was hardly a religious man, but he couldn't help but think that the wretched creature could have only come from the devil himself. The place Harry now found himself both was and wasn't the Midwich Elementary he'd been standing in just a few minutes earlier. The air was heavy, carrying a chill that had him pulling his jacket on tighter. His flashlight, even with a fresh set of batteries, did little to cut through the pervasive gloom. It was like he'd wandered through a portal to another dimension...

What he found in the middle of the courtyard only seemed to confirm that idea. Beneath Harry's feet was an intricately drawn magic circle of some kind. He'd heard of such things being used like a barrier to protect against evil...or perhaps as a door to summon demons and other dark spirits from the depths of hell. His eyes wandered over to the fallen creature. It had continued twitching for a while but had long since fell silent.

Could that thing have been summoned from here? Was it some sort of demon after all? What about the deformed birds and dogs roaming the town? Could Silent Hill really be cursed?

Harry felt dizzy. His head was pounding from its very core, far worse than anything he'd ever experienced. The truth was as real as the blood that stained his clothes, but it was simply too much for him to take. Harry wanted to throw everything away, to give up and run from this forsaken town as fast as his feet could carry him. He desperately willed himself to wake up from this nightmare, but he



was as far from the comfort of his bed as he could possibly be. There will be time rest once Cheryl's safe... This thought was the only thing that willed his weary body forward.

The rest of the school was as unrecognizable as the courtyard. The classrooms were in complete disarray; desks had been flipped and scattered about the room as if there'd been a natural disaster. Just as Harry had finished searching the staff room and was about to leave, the sudden ringing of one of the office phones stopped him in his tracks. He couldn't think of a single good reason not to, so he picked up the receiver.

"Daddy..." Harry froze at the sound of that beloved voice.

"Help me!"

"Cheryl!"

"Daddy... where are you...?"

"I'm here! I'm right here! Cheryl, where are you?"

In a second, her voice was cut off. The line was dead. Harry stood paralyzed, the receiver still clutched in his hand. His heart pounded as frenzied thoughts rushed through his mind. Cheryl was begging for help. She was in trouble. She sounded on the verge of tears... These monsters... the magic circle... Could his daughter be a victim of some cult? Was she kidnapped as a sacrifice for some black ritual? His chest felt like it could burst. That call offered no clues to Cheryl's whereabouts, but the fact that a phone rang here had to mean something. This school had to be connected to it all. There was no choice but to keep searching.



Leonard Rhine
The Monster Lurks

Those were the words on the wall in the men's bathroom, hastily scrawled in dark red blood. Beside the inscription was a suspended corpse, crucified just like the body Harry found in the alley. The only thing that disturbed him more than the gruesome sight, was the inescapable feeling that he'd heard that name somewhere before. Leonard Rhine was an old author, one who focused on the occult and other supernatural matters. Most people with any respect for reason and rationality turned their noses up at his work. Though he'd admittedly been one of those people, Harry had read one of his books in the past. He couldn't remember any of the specifics, it'd been so long ago, but it gave him an idea. Harry made his way to the library.

It might have been a stretch to expect to find any of Rhine's books in a school library - his work was a bit obtuse for grade schoolers – but the clue was worth investigating. He had no doubt it was something Cheryl meant for him to see.

His nearly-empty gun clutched in his hands, Harry cautiously poked his head around the hallway corner. There were more clawed creatures wandering through the school He'd heard their slapping footsteps accompanied by a whisper of static more than once, but he always managed to slip by them unnoticed.

The school's library was in surprisingly good shape considering the state of the other rooms in the building. Although there were many books scattered across the floor, the majority of them were still



sitting untouched on the shelves. As his eyes scanned the floor, the cover of one book caught Harry's eye. A wave of nostalgia compelled him to pick it up. He knew this book; it was full of stories and fairy tales he used to read at Cheryl's bedside to lull her to sleep. He flipped the book open to a story titled "The Lizard and the Hunter."

*...Hearing this, the hunter, armed with bow
and arrow, said: 'I will kill the Lizard.'
But upon meeting his opponent, he held back,
taunting: 'Who's afraid of a reptile?'. At
this, the furious Lizard hissed: 'I'll
swallow you in a single bite!'. Then,
the huge creature attacked, jaws open
wide. This was what the man wanted.
Calmly drawing his bow, he shot into the
Lizard's gaping mouth. Effortlessly the
arrow flew, piercing the defenseless maw.
And the Lizard fell down dead.*

Respectfully wiping some of the dust from the cover, Harry set the book back on one of the shelves. Only then did he notice that on that shelf full of brightly colored picture books, one book in particular stood out. It was thick, heavy, and dark colored with no words on the spine and no pictures on the cover. Harry flipped open the first page to see the words "The Monster Lurks, by Leonard Rhine" printed in bold letters. He began scanning through the pages.



Chapter 3: Manifestation of Delusions

...Poltergeists are among these. Negative emotions like fear, worry or stress manifest into external energy with physical effects. Nightmares have, in some cases, been shown to trigger them. However, one such phenomenon doesn't appear to happen to just anyone. Although it's not clear why, adolescents, especially girls, are prone to such occurrences.

Harry slammed the book shut. The words written on those pages brought unpleasant memories to his mind. Memories of Cheryl-

“Cheryl, can you please be quiet? Daddy’s trying to work.”

“Sorry Dad.”

“Who’s that you were playing with? Some of the neighbor kids?”

“It’s the boogeyman.”

“Oh my! So you’re telling me the ghost from under your bed crawled out in the middle of the day?”

“Can you please tell him not to come back?”

“Ah, you’re such a cute girl that you’re even popular with ghosts huh?”

“He wants to take me somewhere. He wants us to go together.”

“That sounds serious.”

“When I don’t listen to what he says, he scratches me with his claws.”

“Really now? Let me take a look...”

The welt he saw scraped across his daughter’s chest was still burned into his eyes. Thick, red lines cut through her delicate skin, looking almost like a sequence of letters. Since that day, accidents began



occurring in their home. Sometimes Harry would hear a strange commotion in the kitchen, only to find that every cabinet had been flung open and the floor was littered with bowls and plates. Sometimes days or even weeks would pass by with no activity at all. Still, it was enough to turn Harry, a vehement non-believer in the supernatural, to researching occult literature.

Maybe that message wasn't just to get him to read Leonard Rhine's book. There had to be a connection between what happened that day at their home and Cheryl's disappearance now. It had to be...a curse. That was the first word that entered his mind, but Harry quickly shook it off. What could an innocent, seven-year-old girl do to earn such resentment from someone? Cheryl grew up blessed with undying love from Harry and his late wife Jodie. Though she had no blood tied to her parents, Cheryl still grew to become a honest and gentle girl, even sharing Jodie's kind smile. But...

The reality of the world weighed heavily on Harry's mind. The world was not as kind and just as he would have wished for his daughter. Children were tricked into believing that honest and good people are always rewarded and that evil people will be punished.

The reality was that corruption was rampant and that evil people far outnumbered the good. Jodie, an innocent woman, was run down and had her life stolen from her, while the criminal driving that car got out without so much as a scratch and now spent his days idling away in prison. Adults corrupt the earth with their selfishness and insatiable desires, giving no care to the blameless children who must pay the price...



Wandering in this depressed mood, Harry found that he'd unknowingly made his way back to the basement. Perhaps this dark, decrepit place was where he expected lowlife criminals to hide. Or where they might hide their victims. Stepping into the boiler room again, Harry happened upon a door that he didn't remember seeing before. It sat in the darkness like a gaping mouth, inviting him to step inside.

Mysterious flames flickered before Harry's eyes, bringing to mind the tortuous fires of hell. If a deranged Satanist was to choose a place to make their hideout, this was as likely a place as any. Then again, it'd also be a delightful place to set a trap. And if it is, I guess I just waltzed right into it...But this is where he intended to turn the tables. He'd find the sick freaks responsible for all this, blow a hole in their heads, step over their corpses, and find Cheryl at any cost. A stiff smile rose to Harry's face. Okay, he might be overdoing it just a bit. It was pretty hard to imagine himself, an out-of-shape author from the suburbs, as some kind of gun-toting tough guy out of an action movie.

In the center of the room was a hole which held a recessed altar. Fire licked at the surface, crackling and warping Harry's vision until he could swear he saw a vision in the flames. Cheryl? He saw the figure of a girl tied to a chair. The cruel phantom flickered until it faded completely. The fear that rose in his heart was matched only by the blistering rage that grew hotter than the fire before him. His face twisted into an enraged scowl as he clutched the pistol tighter.

"Come out, you cowards! Give me back my daughter!"

In answer to his command, a black shape formed behind the flame.



But it wasn't his daughter's kidnapper; it wasn't even human. No doubt it'd been sent to finish Harry off. It was a lumbering creature, huge enough to put all the other monster's he'd encountered to shame. All of his bravado and savior fantasies melted away in an instant, fear quickly extinguishing his anger. Harry inched backwards until his back hit the cold metal of the door. It was shut tight.

He was trapped.

The monster slowly made its way around the fire, the lights showing its true form: a reptile to dwarf all other reptiles. It looked as if it'd never seen a ray of light in its entire life; the creature's skin was pale and translucent, glistening with a slimy layer of mucus. The place where its eyes should have been was merely an empty socket, a black, emotionless hole. Its bulky, crocodile-like legs were barely large enough to support its massive body. Fortunately for Harry, it meant that the lizard's progress was slow as it sluggishly dragged itself closer.

Harry ran from the door, circling around the flames to the other side of the room. Even though he felt like his feet might fail him at any moment, they still moved him faster than the lumbering creature. But he couldn't keep this up forever. He could run and run all he wanted, but eventually his strength would give out and he'd find himself cornered...

"Get away!" Harry gathered what little courage he had left before turning to face the approaching monster. Fixing his aim on the lizard, he fired. Two gunshots rang through the cramped room. Though



Harry was certain he must have hit it, the monstrous lizard shrugged off the bullets without so much as wince. In an instant, the space in front of him turned pitch black. Harry stared dumbfounded as he realized that he was staring directly into the lizard's gaping maw. His amazement temporarily outweighed his fear; the creature's head had completely split vertically in two, all the way down to its neck. Its mouth was easily big enough to swallow him whole, lined with sharp, jagged teeth. Its breath was putrid, like rotting garbage, making Harry's eyes sting. To die by being crushed between those jaws and smothered by that revolting scent was surely the worst death he could imagine.

Harry desperately scrambled backwards, putting distance between himself and the lizard's gaping mouth. Killing this thing wouldn't be easy; two bullets hardly did anything and he doubted that a hundred more could even injure it. Then again...he only had five rounds left. A feeling of hopelessness washed over him; Harry could almost feel the blood draining from his face. Calm down. I just have to calm down...Harry thought. It had to have some sort of weakness. How could one kill such a massive beast?

I will kill the lizard.

The words from the fairy tale surfaced in his mind. Of course, that would make him the hunter, armed with a pistol rather than a bow. Harry smiled, he almost could have cried.

But upon meeting his opponent, he held back, taunting: 'Who's afraid of a reptile?'



Well, Harry was. He was more afraid now than he'd ever been in his life.

The furious Lizard hissed: 'I'll swallow you in a single bite!'

Harry inched closer to monster's open mouth, its rotten breath bringing hot, stinging tears to his eyes. The huge creature attacked, jaws open wide. This was what the man wanted.

Harry pulled the trigger again and again, sending all five bullets into the back of the lizard's throat and straight through its body. It let out an ear-piercing cry, recoiling back before collapsing to the ground with a heavy thud. In an instant, Harry's legs went weak and he too fell to the floor, still holding the gun stiffly in front of him. He was convinced that the lizard would get back to its feet at any moment and he'd be completely at its mercy. But it didn't move.

As relief slowly replaced his adrenaline and Harry was able to focus on things other than his imminent death, he realized that someone else was in the room with him. The figure of a young girl stood over him, watching him intently. Harry stared at the girl; the girl stared back at Harry. She wasn't Cheryl. So who could she be...?

Before he realized it, Harry had returned to the boiler room. There was no trace of the door that led to the burning room. The monster, the girl, everything was just gone. In fact, everything was just as it had been before he traveled through the mysterious clock tower. He was just standing in an ordinary boiler room in an ordinary school.



Harry could hear a bell sounding in the distance.

The darkness that has so suddenly fallen was gone, even though hardly enough time had passed for it to be dawn already. Even with the thick fog, being out in the open again felt refreshing. Harry stood on the school's front steps as he examined his map. The bells sounded like church bells, but he had no clue who could be ringing them. Perhaps it was someone trying to gather the survivors? Maybe such a person would know what was going on here. Scanning over the homes and businesses, Harry's finger fell on a likely location:

The Balkan Church.

Bradbury Street was collapsed, so Harry would have to take the long way around through Bachman Road. Remembering that his gun was empty, Harry kept an eye out for any place that looked like it sold guns or ammo. He moved quickly and carefully, keeping to the shadows as not to attract any attention from the monsters still roaming the streets.

Though it seemed to take forever, the church wasn't as far as he first thought. Before long, the church's gothic architecture emerged from the fog. If Harry recalled, about 25% of Maine's population identified as Catholic. By the looks of it, many of Silent Hill's residents seemed to belong to that number.

The first thing that caught his eye when he entered was a large crucifix hanging behind the altar, casting a somber atmosphere over the room. The pews were all empty; no believers came to worship today. Looks like Harry was the only one the bell had summoned. A



woman stood before the altar. Harry approached her, his footsteps echoing across the vaulted ceiling.

She certainly wasn't his young daughter; even from under her pure-white veil, he could see her hair was losing its luster. Her face was gnarled, like an aged tree, and her manner of dress was modest and plain. Despite her harmless appearance, something about her seemed off. Harry couldn't help that wonder if she was actually much younger than she looked.

"Were you the one ringing the bell?" Harry asked.

"I have been waiting for you." The woman gave him a smile that creased the wrinkles on her cheeks.

"I knew you would arrive; it was foretold by the Lord."

"Who are you? What's going on in this town; where did everyone go?"

"The hour of judgement is at hand. The battle between good and evil has already begun." The wide smile never left her face as she spoke, as if she was intoxicated with mirth. She didn't seem to be all there. Harry frowned. Maybe whatever had happened to this town was too much for her and she just snapped. Then again, maybe she was this way from the start. But...though her words seemed insane, the look in her eyes was perfectly lucid, shining with a hint of slyness.

"You are still searching for that girl, are you not?"

"Girl? You mean Cheryl!?" Harry raised his voice. It was as if there mere mention of Cheryl's name was a spell that could erase his reason, driving everything from his mind but thoughts of saving her. Even if the one casting the spell was some fanatic, his desperation



was too strong for him to resist.

“Where is she!?”

The woman shook her head sadly.

“Unfortunately, the child has been captured by those who wish evil upon us. I’m afraid she is to be a sacrifice.”

“What are you talking about!?” Harry stepped closer to the woman, reaching out to grab her, to demand answers.

“Do not touch me!” The woman cried out in a booming voice. She smiled again, but there was a shade of disgust hidden beneath it.

“My body has been sanctified as that of a true servant of God by a vow of chastity. This is how I receive His blessed revelations. Do you understand?”

“Uh...yes?” Harry nodded slowly.

“I am your ally. I desire the child’s safety as much as you do. Now listen well: There is nothing to be gained by floundering about at random. You must follow the path. The path of the Hermit, hidden within Flauros.”

“...Flauros?”

“It is the silence of purgatory. It can break through the walls of darkness and counteract the wrath of the underworld.” With that, the woman tossed something on the floor between them.

“It will help you save your daughter from those with ill-intent. Now, make haste to the hospital before it is too late.”

Harry crouched down to pick up the object on the floor. It looked a



bit like a pyramid-shaped toy, but despite its size, it felt heavy in his hand. It made no sound when he shook it, but he couldn't help but feel that there was something inside.

“What am I supposed to do with this?” He asked. But when he lifted his head, the woman was gone, vanished like a wisp of smoke.

Harry took Finney Street to the east and crossed a bridge into central Silent Hill, searching for a hospital at the mysterious woman's behest. According to his map, there was a building labeled Alchemilla Hospital on the southern end of town; his best bet at this point. Harry would need to travel down Crichton Street to reach it, but something else on the map caught his eye. He made a detour to the opposite corner of the intersection to the police station, hoping to scour the place for ammunition. With all the monsters still lurking in the streets, he wasn't going to make it very far with an empty gun.

Just as Cybil had said, the station was as deserted as the rest of the town. No wonder no one was answering his calls. There were documents and investigation materials spread over the desks, as if everyone had simply vanished in the middle of a regular work day.

Harry began to search each room. The firearm storage was locked tight, so he kept an eye out for any guns that might have been left sitting on someone's desk. Sure enough, he soon spotted a shoulder holster left on a counter next to abandoned paper cups full of coffee.

Whoever this once belonged to must have taken it off on their break



and vanished with the rest of the townspeople before they could return for it. Even as he felt a twinge of guilt at stealing something from someone who'd met such a fate, Harry was determined to put it to good use.

Harry slid the gun from the holster to check it out. It looked to be a 10mm automatic, fully loaded with nine rounds. Pleased with his discovery, he returned the gun and took the holster, putting it on.

Something caught his eye, a white slip of paper on the counter where the holster had just been.

*"Coroner Seals called.
Officer Gucci is unlikely to
be murdered. He apparently
died naturally.
But, medical records show
Officer Gucci had no prior
symptoms of heart disease."*

Harry grabbed a nearby jacket to protect himself from the cold. As he slid it over his shoulders, his eyes were drawn to a memo scrawled on a chalkboard hanging on the wall.

*"Product only available in select areas of Silent Hill.
Raw material is White Claudia, a plant peculiar to the region.
Manufactured here? Dealer = Manufacturer?"*

White Claudia? The name rang a bell in Harry's mind. He'd written a couple books in the past on domestic drug trafficking and he could



remember some bits and pieces of information. It was a plant that grew on river banks and lake shores, notable for its long oval-shaped leaves and pure white flowers. The seeds were known to have hallucinogenic properties and were often sought after for use in ancient religious ceremonies, but now it was more common refine the seeds into a recreational drug known as PTV. It was popular with the tourists in Silent Hill for a time, but police efforts soon shut down the local traffickers to help clean up the resort town's image.

He never would have entertained the idea of visiting with Cheryl otherwise.

But by the looks of it, it seemed PTV was on the rise again. A lump formed in the back of Harry's throat as his eyes scanned the words on the chalkboard over and over again. He couldn't shake the feeling that it had something to do with Cheryl's kidnapping. Every meager scrap of information he could find was a whisper leading him a step closer to the truth.

"Damn that woman!" Michael Kaufman's voice was shaking with rage. Curse after curse poured from his lips as he crammed items into his luggage.

"Who does that crazy old hag think she's fooling with her 'precious child of God' bullshit? What a joke. You're just some gutter trash who got good at cheating and stealing. Just looking at the brazen face of yours makes me sick. You're nothing but a crook and a liar and everyone in this godforsaken town knows it!"

As he ranted, his office, once a meticulously decorated symbol of his



pride, lay around him in ruin. His mahogany desk and shelves were marred by deep gashes. His precious antique book collection was scattered across the floor, the pages ripped and trampled upon. Even his expensive paintings had been deliberately torn. But this was only meant as a final insult, the real damage was clear when he found his hidden safe cleared out. Important documents and expensive securities were gone and that liquid, his last resort, was nothing but a stain on the carpet.

“And this is the thanks I get for my years of cooperation? I swear I’m going to make that sneaky old bitch pay.”

He had no doubt in his mind that this was the cult’s doing. The safe’s lock showed no sign of forced entry; someone must have found the passcode somehow. He’d been keeping such a close eye on the cult’s activities and they’d still managed to slip by him.

“She thinks she can pull a fast one on me? Well joke’s on her; I never trusted that old bag for a second.”

Kaufman had transferred funds to a foreign account in anticipation of just such a betrayal. It was nothing compared to what he’d lost in the current turmoil, but it would be more than enough to get by. It was only a matter of time before the incident in Silent Hill came to light, and he’d much rather live a modest existence somewhere far away than rot in jail. Jail time might even be an optimistic sentence if his involvement in all this got out...Fleeing the country was his best bet at this point.

“Ugh, how did it even come to this?” He ground his teeth. What had



come over him wasn't a change of heart and he certainly wasn't being tormented by guilt after all he'd done. What he felt now was utter hatred. To have to deal with this after everything he'd done for The Order, after all the funds he contributed and the space he let them occupy and the medical treatment he offered...He could have never imagined the insanity that his actions would bring about. He had to stifle a laugh at the very idea that he would end up associating with those deranged cultists in the first place.

“Guess she's more than just a crook, she's a maniac who'd sell her own soul to the devil.”

He wouldn't be needing clothes and there was no time for gathering unnecessary possessions so he forwent a bulky travel bag in favor of sorting essentials in an unassuming attaché case. He packed two passports, one with his actual name and a counterfeit bearing a pseudonym, a stash of gold and wadded bills taken from his safety deposit box, a 9mm handgun and two boxes of ammunition, and an emergency set of medical supplies.

Just as he was closing the case's lid and making sure he'd leave nothing behind, Kaufman heard a growl from behind him. He turned around to see a hideous monster of a dog shambling into the room. The creature groaned, saliva dripping from its eager teeth. For a moment, Kaufman could only stare in horror at the demon as it crept closer. In an instant he reached for the attaché case behind him...

Even from outside Alchemilla Hospital, Harry could hear the muffled gunshots. Someone, a normal human, was in there. Feeling



equal parts hopeful and uneasy, Harry ran through the hospital's entrance and down the hall.

Bang!

Another shot rang out from somewhere behind the waiting room. He turned a corner to see the door to an examination room sitting wide open and ran in, only to be greeted by a bullet whizzing past his head and embedding itself in the door frame behind him.

“Wait, don't shoot!” Harry held his own gun above his head and his free hand open, hopefully signifying that he didn't mean the stranger any harm.

“Thank God, another human being...” The man across from Harry let his shoulders relax, bringing the gun to his side. He looked to be about 50 or so years old with neatly slicked back hair and dressed in a fine suit, giving him an overall air of importance. It was then that Harry noticed the corpse of a dog oozing blood onto the floor.

“You got attacked too huh. Are you hurt?”

“No. I'm fine.”

“My name's Harry Mason.” Harry said, lowering his hand and offering it as a handshake instead. The man accepted, grasping Harry's hand with his rather cold, damp, palm.

“Michael Kaufman.”

“Do you work at this hospital?”

“You could say that. Are you with the police?”

“Oh, no. I'm just a tourist. I just carry a gun to protect myself from those creatures, same as you.”



“I see.” Harry could tell by the look in his eyes that Kaufman wasn’t entirely convinced.

“Actually, not long after I came to Silent Hill, my daughter went missing. She’s only seven. Short. Black hair. Have you seen her?”

“I’m afraid not.” Kaufman said, shaking his head. “Listen, I don’t know what’s going on here. I was just taking a nap in the break room and when I woke up, everything was like this.”

“It’s just...I was told I’d find some clue about my daughter here...”

“And just who told you that?”

“Well, I don’t know her name, but it was a woman who was at the Balkan Church.”

“...A woman wearing a veil?”

“Yeah. Do you know her?”

“No, I don’t. I don’t know any such woman.” Suddenly, Kaufman became expressionless, an unreadable brick wall.

“At any rate, I’m terribly sorry about your daughter Mr. Mason but I’m afraid I can’t be any help. I don’t plan on staying in town any longer now that the place is overrun with those abominations.” Not wasting another second, Kaufman snatched up a case from the desk behind him and slid past Harry and through the door.

“You be careful now.” With those few words, Kaufman silently slipped away.

What a strange man...Harry thought. Then again, the way Harry’s line of questioning went, it probably started to feel less like a



friendly conversation and more like a cross-examination. He had no evidence that the man had anything to do with Cheryl's kidnapping, but the encounter had left Harry with unshakable sense of unease.

There were no doctors at Alchemilla Hospital, no nurses bustling about, no patients sitting in the waiting room waiting for their name to be called, not a single soul. Each room Harry checked on the first floor was vacant; abandoned with medical charts and instruments scattered throughout.

Every room was perfectly unremarkable, save for one. The hospital director's office was in a state of chaos, as if it had been burglarized. But this was hardly the work of professional thieves; someone had torn blindly through the office, clearly in search of something. The room was so thoroughly trashed; there was hardly even a place for Harry to set his foot down. If someone was willing to go to such lengths to find something in here, then there might still be a clue that could be of use to him.

The floor was littered with books and scattered documents. In one corner, a picture frame lay in a pile of shattered glass. Harry turned it over to examine it. It was a photo of what looked to be an awards ceremony and the man on the stage smiling and accepting the award was none other than the man he met earlier. It was Kaufman. If this photo was hanging in the director's office, then it was very possible that Kaufman himself was the hospital director. Harry's suspicions deepened. He should have questioned the man further when he had the chance. Then again, he wasn't too keen on trying the patience of a man with a gun and he had no guarantee that he'd get the information he wanted.



What?

Stepping behind the luxurious desk, Harry saw something that gave him pause. At first he thought it was blood. A bottle lay shattered on the floor, its dark red contents spilled into a puddle on the floor.

Collecting a small amount of the liquid on his fingertips, Harry found that it was completely odorless and a bit too thin to be blood.

Perhaps it was medicine? It was a hospital after all...

But Harry wasn't entirely convinced. Hospital or not, it was strange to find a bottle of medicine just sitting around in someone's office like this.

Maybe it was a sample of something left here by a pharmaceutical representative? The words he read on the police station blackboard came to mind.

White Claudia... Could this liquid be the drug PTV? Ridiculous as it may have been, he couldn't shake the suspicion from his mind.

Harry left the director's office and headed for the examination room. Scanning over the shelves, he picked up an unused syringe and a pill bottle before returning. He sucked up as much as the liquid as he could into the syringe, dumping the pills on the floor so he could fill the empty bottle. With a bit of effort, he was able to fill half the bottle.

The woman at the church told him he'd find the answers he needed here, and if Cheryl had been caught up in the schemes of illegal drug traffickers, this red liquid should be enough evidence to prove it.



And even if Cheryl's disappearance had nothing to do with drugs, this might motivate law enforcement to take his case more seriously. With the Silent Hill police out of commission, he might even have to bring this all the way to the FBI.

I knew it. That man is defiantly up to something suspicious. Harry thought to himself as he continued his search, his footsteps echoing through the abandoned hospital. The so-called "Doctor" Kaufmann...If he would hide his identity as the hospital director, then what else could he be hiding? Such a prestigious position would certainly allow him to distribute PTV without arousing suspicion. He had all the equipment and materials at his disposal, he could even easily disguise it as regular medical activity.

Then there was that strange woman he met in the church. After hearing her speak delusional nonsense and seeing the fanatical spark in her eyes, he could easily believe she was on drugs. But as crazy as her words had been, they did end up leading him to the truth...

Harry planned on inspecting the basement next, but the staircase landing was blocked off by fire doors. He went to his last option, the elevator, pressing the call button while praying it still worked. The doors opened in an instant; however, the real problem was inside. No matter how many times he pushed the buttons for the second and third floors, nothing happened. The only button that responded was the one marked for the fourth floor.

Fourth floor? Harry questioned as the elevator began its ascent. He'd seen Alchemilla hospital from the outside and it seemed to only have three floors...So how was this elevator supposed to take him to a



non-existent fourth floor? None of the other buttons were lit up. Could something be trying to guide me? Though the thought sent a chill down his spine, Harry knew there was no going back now.

The elevator doors slid open. Harry knew that in some Asian countries, the number four meant “death”. That description fit the atmosphere of the fourth floor perfectly. Unlike the relatively normal-looking first floor, this floor looked like it was falling apart. Grimy linoleum, peeling plaster, rusted doors, black soot falling from the ceiling...this place seemed like it had been abandoned for years and left to rot. Light trickled through the dusty, yellowed windows, bathing the hallway in an eerie glow.

Taking the stairs down to the third floor presented Harry with the same suffocating environment. No light could reach down here; there was only dense darkness. The state of decay seemed even worse; parts of the building’s foundation were exposed and the path before him was nothing but a chain-link mesh spread across where the floor should have been. In some places, the mesh was missing altogether, leaving nothing but gaping dark holes in the floor. Even with the aid of his flashlight, Harry couldn’t see the bottom. It felt like he’d wandered into some deep, underground cave. It certainly wouldn’t be unusual for deformed monstrosities to be lurking in a place like this.

His ominous prediction would come true sooner than he expected. Harry knew the “nurse” approaching from the darkness wasn’t human; his radio told him so. The crackling noise swelled with each step she took. Soon her monstrous form was illuminated. The nurse’s gait was unsteady and she was hunched over like an old woman even



though her face still looked young. She seemed to be carrying something on her back, and something told Harry that she wasn't just giving a young patient a piggyback ride. Something akin to a camel's hump protruded from her back, like something large had attached itself to her. As she stumbled closer, Harry caught the glint of a scalpel she held in a clenched fist.

The smile she aimed at him was dripping with dark intent; she was eager to dissect her new prey. She wanted to tear off his skin, chop him to pieces, rip out his organs, nourish her young, soft skin with his fresh blood.

"Please." Harry called to the nurse in a somber voice, his gun clenched in his hands. "I don't want to shoot you. You're just being controlled by a monster. If there's any part of you in there that can still hear me then please listen. Just...step out of my way. Please, if you just step aside, I won't have to hurt you."

The nurse's feet moved faster. She'd broken out into a clumsy sprint and was lunging at him. Harry's fingertip hesitated at the trigger. Maybe if he could manage to shoot the parasite-like hump on her back, he could subdue the monster without killing the nurse. But he was worried he wouldn't have the skill to pull it off. He had no military experience and had only recently shot a gun for the first time. Even his results at the shooting range were terrible. Plus, the nurse was moving so erratically that by aiming for the hump, he'd be just as likely to hit her head as well.

Even with a crazed, knife-wielding nurse rushing straight at him, Harry couldn't bring himself to shoot. He leapt to the side at the last



possible second, narrowly avoiding the scalpel but slamming shoulder-first into the opposite wall. The nurse stumbled past, carried by the momentum of the extra weight on her back. But she quickly recovered, turning to come at Harry again.

Harry crouched to the floor and finally aimed the gun, wincing at the pain in his right shoulder. A thought occurred to him. What if this nurse wasn't actually human at all? What if it was a monster pretending to be a possessed human just to prey on his sympathy? If there were creatures loose in this town that could control people, wouldn't he have seen possessed patients too? What about the rest of the townspeople? Or tourists? Or even the police? But he hadn't seen one. That had to be it. He was being deceived.

The nurse's face was a foot away. He opened fire; the barrage of bullets flew between her eyes and pierced her skull. The nurse's body twitched as blood and brain fluid poured from her collapsed face before going limp and collapsing onto the floor. All that remained was the crooked smile on her lips.

A persistent haze clouded Harry's thoughts. Despite the justifications he'd made himself believe, killing the nurse had left a bad taste in his mouth. It was just another monster, another obstacle in his way; he had every reason to eliminate it. Still, the image of the nearly-human woman bleeding out on the floor plagued him with unwarranted guilt. Was it really the monster he made it out to be? Had he actually murdered someone he could have saved? Had he made the right decision? Those questions replayed in his mind over and over until even his devotion to finding Cheryl couldn't justify his actions. He wandered like a sleepwalker through the hospital's



winding corridors.

Before he knew it, Harry ended up down in the basement. He pushed open the first door he saw, stepping into a cluttered storeroom. The boxes stacked on the ground and the medical supplies lining the rusty shelves were caked in what seemed to be several years' worth of dust. Perhaps because of his lightheaded daze, Harry's eyes were drawn right to a point of suspicion, a shelf in the very back of the storeroom. The room was packed with so many boxes that there was hardly any room to walk, but the area around that particular shelf was bare.

Making his way closer to investigate, he saw marks trailing along the ground, as if something had been dragged across. Despite the aged state of the room, it looked as if this shelf had been moved frequently, and recently too. Harry pushed it to the side...and revealed a hidden door. It opened into a gaping passage deeper into the basement. Harry should have been elated; what better place for Cheryl to be hidden than a secret passage? But all he could do was stand and stare into the darkness. The encounter with the nurse had shaken him; he felt gripped by the same fear as when he'd faced the giant creature in the school basement.

Harry slumped to the floor, leaning against the wall and closing his eyes. It must be around noon by now. He hadn't really slept or even stopped to rest in well over twenty-four hours. The wariness in his mind and the fatigue in his body weighed on him until he finally escaped into the respite of sleep.

"Daddy?" Cheryl sat on Harry's lap as he rested in an armchair. She



nestled closer. “Are you sleeping?” He had been sitting here with his head in his hands for a long time, then suddenly closed his eyes. The three year old looked up at her father, he face full of worry. Harry had lost himself in grief after Jodie’s passing. Memories of her occupied his every thought. Even the wonderful memories of her gentle smile, something that should have given him comfort, only tormented him further.

“Hey...dad?” Cheryl shook her father’s knee in alarm. “Daddy, please be okay! I don’t want you to go away too! Please don’t leave me alone...”

Her pleas reached straight to the bottom of his broken heart. Harry slowly opened his eyes. Cheryl...At only three years old she’d been forced to know the sorrows of death, now she feared that it would take her father, the only person she had left in the world. The shock hit him as if Jodie had slapped him in the face. *You’re her father! You have to be here for her now!* He lifted his daughter up and held her tight in his arms.

“I’m so sorry Cheryl. Daddy’s been really careless lately. I...I was so caught up in the past that I forgot that the most important thing in the world was right in front of me.”

Cheryl was his treasure, the greatest gift he’d ever been given in life. She deserved every ounce of devotion in his heart. With that loving embrace, he swore that the two of them would live happy lives together, no matter what.

Harry awoke to the sight of teardrops on the dust-covered floor



before him. For that one moment, he was able to hold Cheryl in his arms again. Though sorrow still sat heavy in his chest, seeing her smiling face in his dream was enough to fill him with renewed determination. Harry felt as if he'd gotten a full-night's sleep, despite his watch saying that only thirty minutes had passed. He was damn lucky none of the monsters wandered down here.

Harry pulled himself to his feet to confront the dark passage. Jodie must have been watching over him; in that moment he felt all the doubt and fear melt away. He would keep that promise he made to Cheryl all those years ago. No matter the cost, he'd bring her home safe.

Behind the hidden door was a smaller, narrow storage room lined with bare shelves. The only feature in the room was a storage hatch on the floor that lifted with a rusty creak to reveal a stairway leading deeper underground.

The room at the bottom of those stairs was identical to the one upstairs, enough to give Harry an odd sense of déjà vu. But it was far from a feeling of familiar comfort. The darkness has solidified into a thick wall that bore down on him from all sides, banished only by the paltry light of his flashlight. An appalling chill snaked its way up Harry's spine. It was the same heavy, otherworldly darkness that he'd felt in the "other" school, the twisted version of reality that lay beyond the clock tower.

A dull hiss sounded from the radio in his pocket, steadily growing louder. Pounding footsteps rapidly approached from the darkness until a sprinting nurse came into view. She was different from the



one Harry had faced before; she wore visible signs of age on her face and her dark hair was flecked with grey. But she had the same hunched posture, the same throbbing hump on her back, and the same murderous grin stretched across her wrinkled face. The only other difference was a thick syringe she clutched in her hand and raised above her head, ready to strike.

There was no way of knowing what kind of vile liquid was sloshing around inside that syringe, but Harry wasn't about to find out. He couldn't afford to hesitate. *Do it for Cheryl.* He steeled himself and unloaded two bullets into the woman's stomach. She recoiled with a shriek, clutching her gushing wound as she collapsed into a bloody pile on the floor.

But it was far from over.

A newcomer was alerted by the commotion and let out a savage roar as it stumbled over the nurse's body and lunged at Harry. He dodged just in time as a pair of scissors sliced past his head, firing another round at the new monster in the process. The bullet just barely grazed the shoulder of what was once a well-dressed young doctor, now a rabid monster just like the nurses. He wasted no time grabbing Harry's arm, forcing them into a close-combat struggle. Before Harry could turn the muzzle to the doctor again, he felt the cold steel scissors pierce his wrist, loosening his grip and sending the gun to the floor. Harry fought for his life through the biting pain, beating the doctor back with his bare hands as he tried to anticipate where those scissors would strike next. In a moment of pure desperation, he grabbed the doctor by the chest and headbutt the monster in the head with all his might.



The doctor stumbled backwards with a heavy groan. Harry took advantage of his stunned opponent and brought smacked the scissors from his hand with his flashlight. Now, if only for a moment, the two were finally on equal footing. Adrenaline coursing through him, Harry let out a yell and hurled his body at the doctor, tackling him to the ground. As the two fell into a heap of flailing limbs, Harry's flashlight slipped from his hand and rolled against the far wall. Suddenly bathed in disorienting darkness, Harry felt a pair of hands grab him by the neck. The doctor dug his fingers into his throat, squeezing with almost supernatural strength. Gasping and choking, Harry struggled to push his attacker away with his right hand while groping through the darkness for his gun with the left. *Come on... come on...* He should have dropped it around here; it had to be there. Or else...

His heart leapt as his hand closed around something cold and metallic. It was too thin to be a gun, but a pair of scissors would save his live all the same. Clenching it tight, he stabbed the Doctor. A wet, gurgling scream pierced the darkness and the doctor's grip went limp. Finally taking in a lungful of precious air, Harry shoved the monster away and scrambled for his flashlight to view the aftermath. The doctor was writhing in agony on the floor, the pair of scissors buried deep in his neck.

Harry's gun lay on the ground not too far away. He picked it up, looking down upon the pathetic creature. One shot was all it took to put it out of its misery. A monster is a monster after all. It would have just as easily killed him. The sooner Harry could shake his unnecessary sentimentality, the longer he'd survive in a place like



this.

Harry continued on with a heavy gait. He had four rounds left but... the harrowing encounter with the doctor left him shaken and exhausted. If another nurse appeared, he didn't feel too confident in his chances.

Nonetheless, he set about the task of checking each room in the long corridor. With every empty room he felt both a wave of relief and disappointment. He wouldn't have to fight for his life again, but he wasn't any closer to finding his daughter either.

“What's this...?”

The final room Harry entered was identical to the others, but somehow the atmosphere felt different. It was a simple hospital room with nothing but a neatly made bed and a nightstand, but somehow it had avoided the corrupting force that had left the rest of the ward in ruin. It was as pristine as a new hotel room and looked to have been cleaned quite recently. Was someone being treated here? And where were they now...?

Harry's chest tightened. Cheryl could have been here. His daughter could have stood in this very room before being whisked off again to God knows where. Harry's eyes were drawn to a picture frame sitting atop the nightstand. He saw, to his surprise, the face of a young girl. Her eyes seemed distant and her expression was tinged with melancholy. Harry recognized her instantly as the mysterious girl he'd spotted in the boiler room back at the elementary school. As he stared into those sorrowful eyes, Harry became certain of one



thing. This girl was the one held prisoner in this room, not Cheryl. But just who was she?

Even after all he'd been through, Harry had been unable to find a single trace of Cheryl in this hospital. The only remaining lead he had was the suspicious doctor Kaufmann, but he was long gone. He could be halfway out of the state by now. Harry still had his one meager connection the Brahms police force; he wondered if he could get them to open an investigation to track the man down.

Weighed down with disappointment, Harry trekked back to the first floor. He found the previously locked fire escape and unlocked it from the inside, pushing it open to reveal a grim sight. The once bright and spotless hospital he saw when he first arrived had decayed to the same state as the basement. The walls, the floor, even the air itself had been corroded by darkness. It was as if the building had aged centuries in the short time he'd been away. Looking around in morbid bewilderment, Harry made his way back to the waiting room.

A theater stage set in a perfect façade of normalcy on one side, but simply walk behind it and one can see it from a different perspective. Did Silent Hill have two faces as well? If his theory was correct, then whatever was happening at the school and the hospital must be connected.

Harry was walking past an examination room door when a sudden noise gave him pause. Someone was in there. Another nurse? The



wise option would be to just keep walking, but he couldn't ignore the slim possibility that it might be Cheryl. Who knows, maybe Kaufmann forgot something important and risked a return trip for it.

Harry took a deep breath and clenched his gun, feeling a dull throb of pain in the hand the monstrous doctor had stabbed. His joints ached, his body was plagued by fatigue, and he could feel his resolve crumbling by the second. But when it came down to it, he had no choice. If things went bad again, he'd just turn around and run for it. "Please let me make it out alive..." Harry murmured a quiet prayer as he swung the door open.

Hands shaking, he pointed the flashlight and muzzle at every corner of the room. Just as he suspected, a nurse was crouched under a desk, lying in wait. She looked up at him, squinting in the flashlight's glare. Harry was poised to pull the trigger, but the look on her face stopped him. He wasn't met with a distorted smile, nor did she have a stumbling gait or a grotesque hump.

"Thank God, another normal person!" The nurse exclaimed as she scrambled out from under the desk. Harry finally lowered the gun. Her face was filled with relief; she hardly even noticed she'd nearly been shot.

"I'm Lisa Garland. But you can call me Lisa."

"Name's Harry Mason. Harry is fine." Her bright smile and warm demeanor seemed to ease his tired mind and heal his weary body in an instant. She must have an incredible bedside manner; Harry might have actually enjoyed being a patient here if she were the one taking



care of him.

“It feels like I’ve been in here forever. I was hoping someone would come to save me soon.”

“I’m looking for someone too. I came here looking for answers but those nurses...everyone’s lost their minds. You and I are the only normal people left.”

“It’s so awful...I blacked out and when I came to, the staff, the patients, everyone was just gone. Harry, what on earth is happening here?”

“I wish I knew. I’m just a tourist. By the time I arrived, everyone was already gone.”

“It’s like a living nightmare. I just wish I could wake up...” Lisa’s cheerful smile faded. Harry couldn’t help but sympathize with her, holed up here all alone as the world seemed to crumble around her.

“Anyway, we should hurry up and get out of here. I’ll stay with you.”

“Of course. But...There’s something I have to do before I can leave. I’m looking for my daughter.”

“Your daughter’s missing?”

“Yeah. Her name’s Cheryl. Short, black hair. Just turned seven. Do you know anything?”



“I was unconscious for awhile so I haven’t seen anyone...Sorry.”

“That’s alright. No need to apologize.” He was feeling let down by her answer, but one nagging question still remained. It surely had nothing to do with Cheryl, but it had been weighing on his mind for a while now.

“I found this weird room hidden in the basement and there was a picture of a young girl in there. Do you know anything about her?”

“A hidden room? What are you talking about?”

“Yeah. I found this staircase inside one of the storage rooms and-”

His words were cut short by a jarring screech of a siren.

“Damn...my head...” Harry clutched his head as the shrill call seemed to echo inside his skull.

“Harry? What’s wrong?” Lisa looked to him, concerned. The sound was so loud it seemed to be drowning out his own thoughts, how could she not hear it? Was it all in his head?

“Harry!? Stay with me! Harry!”

...Harry...

...Harry...



Lisa's voice drifted further and further away before it disappeared into the reverberating sirens. The pain throbbing in his head turned his vision dark. In an instant, the sound stopped. When Harry forced his eyes back open, there was no sign of Lisa. The examination room was just as bright and clean as when he first visited.

"It appears you were able to escape the grasp of the darkness." A voice that didn't belong to Lisa pulled Harry from his confusion. He looked up to see the aged face of the woman from the church.

"You-"

"I believe introductions are overdue. You may call me Dahlia Gillespie."

"I don't care about your name! I want to know where my daughter is! I only came to this god-forsaken hospital because of you and there's nothing here!"

"I'm afraid you were too late."

"What are you talking about?"

"The Darkness." Dahlia's voice was calm but her eyes glistened with intense fervor.

"This town is being devoured by darkness. Strength must overcome petty desire. Childish sleep talk. I knew this day would come."

Harry stared in disbelief as utter nonsense poured from her mouth.



Just as he suspected, this lady was completely crazy after all. Just because of all the bizarre things happening in town, he'd let this delusional old woman send him on a wild goose chase that nearly got him killed. He was shaken from his thoughts when Dahlia addressed him again.

“Have you not seen the crest marked on the ground all over town?”

“A crest? Like the one in the schoolyard?”

“It is the mark of Samael. Etched across all corners of this town. You mustn't let it be completed.”

Samael. A being also called the red serpent; revered by some as an angel, reviled by others as a demon.

“Only you can end this. It is beyond my abilities. If you are able to halt the mark's completion, the darkness plaguing this town will be dispelled and you may even be reunited with your little girl. There is another church in this town; that is your destination. Don't let it be completed.”

Dahlia placed something atop the desk as she spoke. A key. Harry's gaze wandered for but a moment, distracted by the metal gleam. When he looked back, Dahlia had vanished. Harry tilted his head. As he sat in the heavy stillness, only one thought occupied his mind.

That woman is a witch.